DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 060 839 JC 720 083

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TITLE The Who, What, Why of Instructor Evaluation.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Los Angeles. ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Coll. Information.
REPORT NO Topical-Pap-33
PUB DATE Apr 72
NOTE 19p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, 96 Powell Library, University of California, Los Angeles 90024 (Limited supply available free of charge)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Evaluation; *Evaluation Techniques; Faculty Evaluation; *Junior Colleges; *Self Evaluation; State Legislation; *Teacher Evaluation

ABSTRACT

A self-report system for individual community college instructors to use in evaluating their own professional performance is advanced as a tentative means to respond to California teacher evaluation bill SB 696. Four instructor activity areas are suggested as appropriate for evaluation: (1) instruction, requiring the use of specific measurable objectives; (2) service to the college, including committee work, club work, and other institutional activities; (3) service to the community; and (4) professional expertise, including those elements increasing an instructor's knowledge of his field. The primary aspect of the self-evaluation process consists of a faculty interviewing committee to question instructors about each of the above named areas. Instructors will present to the committee teaching objectives, test scores, student rating forms, and a resume of school, community, and professional activities. A yearly file on each instructor, developed from the interviews, would be reviewed at each evaluation meeting. This self-report system differs from ordinary self-report and introspective methods in that it relies on concept measurement, is open to peers for process evaluation, and focuses on instructor intentions and results. (AL)

ED 060839

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THE WHO, WHAT, WHY OF

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION

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JC 720 083

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Topical Paper No. 33
April 1972

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ideas presented herein were excerpted from two sources:

Confronting Identity: The Community College Instructor by Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

Measuring Faculty Performance by Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer, available through ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P.O. Drawer O, Bethesda, Md. 20014. The document number is ED 031 222. Price: microfiche, $.65; hard copy $3.29.

For their critical comments on the draft of this paper, we gratefully thank William F. Shawl, dean of instruction, Golden West College, and Yates Calvert Greer+, president, Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. Our thanks also to Judy Binsacca for her editorial assistance.

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THE WHO, WHAT, WHY OF
INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION

by

Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer

"Wow, that was a good class! They responded to just about everything I said."

"Thanks. You're the fourth student this month who's been in to tell me how much he learned last semester."

"Another committee to serve on! You'd think that's all I had to do!"

"I'd revise my course this semester if I could get some assistance."

"There's a new course in my field at the university that I'd like to take but I don't have time."

"Should I go to that service club luncheon tomorrow?"

All these statements relate to a process known as self-evaluation. Every instructor evaluates himself, more or less frequently, more or less consistently. This paper may help you sort it all out.

WHY NOW?

Until recently only a few instructors were concerned with faculty evaluation. Most ignored the issue. Oh, it was there, but it didn't mean anything. You know, during your early years in the profession, the principal or dean or division chairman visited your class and watched you teach. Sometimes he filled out a check sheet and after class bought a cup of coffee and went over the form with you. You thanked him, recognizing the exercise as part of his job, and perhaps reflected on his comments. But it never meant anything. You knew that as soon as you had tenure the whole thing would be done with. At most, you may have wondered at the intense reactions of your more anxious colleagues or smiled at the administrators' attempts to create better check forms. But it didn't really matter. Faculty evaluation was in the doldrums of professional education, lolling about at the level of in-service training. It was the district's rule book, but neither you nor your colleagues took it very seriously.

Today, evaluation has come in from the cold. Instructors who had previously ignored the issue have been forced to acknowledge demands for faculty accountability. It would have been preferable if the profession had exercised its autonomy and developed substantive evaluation guidelines for itself. But not until the legislature passed a bill mandating distinct evaluation procedures--as happened recently in California--was a real flurry of interest stimulated on the campuses. The same kind of incentive may have to occur in other states before meaningful evaluation procedures are instigated.

The California teacher evaluation bill, SB 696, mandates periodic evaluation of all teachers, regular and contract. Inputs to the appraisal of each instructor are to be obtained from students, administrators, faculty colleagues, and from the instructor himself. Although this legislative act authorizes each district to devise its own scheme, some sort of evaluation is required.

The bill has stimulated intense activity by various professional groups. Teacher organizations seek to determine the hidden meanings behind the mandated evaluation guidelines. Is this just another example of the harassment of faculty by administrators? A backdoor attempt to abolish tenure? Administrators and trustees assess the legislation from the standpoint of what it signifies for the shifting power lines and relationships developing between the Certificated Employee Councils (formerly known as faculty negotiating councils)--that have become so powerful in recent years--and themselves. And skittish instructors wait for further guidelines, looking to their office mates, their department chairmen, or their campus organizations to deal with the problem.

These perceptions of the changed evaluation guidelines as they affect the relationships between groups might have been anticipated--any new or changed situation is first examined from the standpoint of what it means in the political realities of the schools. However, after the preliminary confusion over the new regulations subsides, the affected individuals and groups must take the initiative in working out the requisite procedures. It is to faculty members at this stage in their thinking that this paper is addressed.

The guidelines for evaluation presented herein build on a view of the instructor as a mature individual who uses his profession to enhance his own identity and growth. They follow concepts stemming both from dynamic psychology and from the discipline of instruction. Instruction is defined here as a deliberate sequence of events organized so that learning occurs, as opposed to random teaching activity that may or may not produce a resultant effect. The instructor is not only one who instructs; he has other responsibilities as well--to the institution, to the community in which it is located, and to himself. But, as a professional person, the instructor should judge himself primarily on his effects on students, his client population. To the extent they learn what he proposes to teach them, he has been a success.

These definitions are crucial because, where there are no overriding concepts, the evaluation mechanisms remain trivial--and rightfully ignored by the professional instructor. Or, just as damaging, the political arena becomes the reality. Unless the schemes employed to evaluate instructors are constructed on tangible dimensions, they will serve no purpose other than to offer still another focal point for strife between contending forces. And unless the evaluation systems allow the person to function as an individual with a certain degree of autonomy and dignity, they will be relegated to a position of necessary but meaningless directives. This holds true for self-evaluation just as it does for evaluation by others.

PURPOSES

Before any evaluation scheme can be formulated, some consensus must be reached about common purposes. Today the most obvious purpose

for revising instructor evaluation procedures is to meet the requirements set down by the legislature. This is a narrow definition of purpose, but because the bill does provide the necessary impetus, it must be seen as a prime reason for revised evaluation. Actually, the guidelines suggested by the bill are broad, and nearly any type of evaluation format can be interpreted as fitting the mandate if it includes periodic and systematic outputs from the instructor himself, and from students, faculty groups, and administrators.

In general, whether carefully spelled out or merely implied, the usual purposes for evaluating faculty are several: to make judgments about the faculty, to award merit pay, to provide a basis for establishing tenure or continuing contracts, and to provide evidence of faculty competency.

Other purposes for evaluating faculty relate to institutional goals. These include the direction of faculty efforts apart from pay raises or extraneous rewards; the improvement of instruction; the development of instructional specialists; and the creation of situations in which faculty, administrators, and students can better communicate and work toward common purposes.

A more meaningful purpose for faculty evaluation--and the one most often neglected--is to enhance the growth of the person being evaluated. To be truly viable rather than merely self-perpetuating, a profession and its evaluation scheme must offer something of value to those within the profession who are ostensibly the target of the assessment. Call it self-actualization or the drive toward maturity, the instructor is a growing, dynamic individual.

The evaluation procedures employed by the profession must contribute to his growth, not serve merely as a basis for punishment or praise or as an initiation rite.

Since educational enterprises ostensibly center around student learning, we maintain that faculty evaluation must effectively measure this criterion as well as faculty growth. Accordingly, evaluation procedures that stem from a merger of both these concepts are the most valid and purposeful, and, in the long run, exceedingly valuable to the people and the institution.

No matter what the approach to measuring faculty performance, teaching should be evaluated in terms of the instructor's effectiveness, his impact on students--whether intrinsic or external. This position supports the thesis that teaching cannot usefully be considered apart from learning. If instruction is to be evaluated, there must exist an acceptable definition of teaching; and if teaching is defined as "causing learning," we must then assume that learning can be appraised in some objective fashion. Thus, the instructor who accepts the definition of teaching as "causing learning" has taken an important step toward the type of professional integration that comes with the desire to be judged by one's own effects. He defines goals and objectives and measures outcomes. This step will help the instructor gain a more definite sense of professionalism and, in addition, a clear-cut awareness of what his true identity is.

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for faculty evaluation is spelled out in the new guidelines. The literature documents the role of the groups involved by describing various techniques that have been previously employed.

Each of the major constitutent groups--administrators, students, the faculty at large, and the instructor himself--is assigned a role in the scheme. More important issues revolve around the variant perceptions among these groups, the relative weight of their judgments, and the arbitration of differences. Nevertheless, our position is that juggling the worth of the claims of contending forces is counterproductive. Anyone should be included who wants to participate and can conveniently do so. Once the notion is accepted that all parties have a legitimate stake in the process, the respective role of each group may be defined.

Obviously, the most important component of self-evaluation is the faculty member himself. While the instructor considers ratings by other groups and acknowledges their suggestions, it is he who must ultimately rate himself, and then test his own views against the perceptions of others. The more honest and mature he is, the more his professionalism becomes evident. The truly mature person, able to integrate awareness of self with a sense of responsibility, is open to his own experiences. Concomitantly, he is free enough to focus on his professional demands and turn from a preoccupation with self to a concern for others. He views himself as effectual to the extent that he causes change in his students. This is not altruism in the usual sense; rather, it is the ideal of man as one whose concern with self inevitably extends to others.

WHAT SHOULD YOU EVALUATE?

For purposes of evaluation, the community college instructor's responsibilities may be divided into four areas: <u>instruction</u>, <u>service</u>

to the college, service to the community, and professional expertise. Although few people consistently engage in all activities, and fewer still perform everything with equal facility, all functions should be included in the evaluation process.

The instruction to be evaluated encompasses both ends and means. The extent to which the instructor's students have learned what he supposed he was teaching them constitutes the ends of instruction. Only if he has a set of specific measurable objectives, stated in terms of student learning, can the instructor assess his effects. He must write his own objectives or, at the very least, select objectives from among those that others have written. His media or means are the processes he employs--discussions and lectures, tapes and texts. But these are inputs only through which he strives for the desired outcome, student learning.

Service to the college includes sitting on committees, sponsoring student clubs, and assisting in a variety of institutional activities. Service to the community may be as closely connected to the college as speaking on behalf of bond issues, or as distant as coaching a Little League baseball team. Nearly anything considered valuable to community well-being is included here.

Professional expertise encompasses those elements that increase a person's knowledge of his work: courses taken at the university, workshop participation, books or journals read, and professional consultations. Also included is anything that is reasonably useful in aiding the instructor's own currency in his academic field or in the discipline of instruction.

A crucial point here is that the process of evaluation must be evolutionary, changing according to the tenor of the times and the perceptions of the people involved. Thus, although checklists and other fixed forms have been used for years, we do not recommend them. Forms have a way of becoming static, losing meaning the longer they are in existence. What we do advocate--and outline here--is a process of thinking and acting. The instructor may devise his own checklists if he so desires; but our emphasis is on rationale and approach.

IMPLEMENTING THE PROCESS

The desirability of faculty evaluation may be accepted, but how do you set up such a system? Where do you begin?

Self-evaluation begins well before the employment interview. The new instructor has selected himself to join the teaching ranks; he owes his prospective institution and his profession the insight that comes from looking at himself openly and honestly, understanding his strengths and weaknesses. Many people, singly and in groups, interview the applicant. He must prepare himself in advance to answer their queries in terms of what he intends doing in the various aspects of his profession. Herein lies the heart of academic self-evaluation--the instructor's prior commitment to himself, a commitment that he must transmit to his prospective employers and colleagues.

The process that precedes the initial employment interviews should be continued throughout the instructor's career. He must frequently question his own intentions and periodically assess his effects. The difference between the initial interview and subsequent dialogues--besides, of course, the ease that comes with familiarity--is that the

instructor acts both prospectively and retrospectively. Not only does he ask, "What do I intend doing?" but "What did I do last term that should be continued...or dropped? (based on the results I obtained)." If the institution has adopted a positive attitude toward evaluation, the instructor will become part of a procedure in which his fellows question him in this fashion. If not, he will have to take the lead in structuring a dialogue.

How does this type of self-evaluation fit into a college's overall instructor evaluation process? Ideally, this process will include one meeting per school term. Present at these one-hour sessions will be the instructor and representatives of groups wishing to be involved, e.g., the administration (represented by the Dean of Instruction or his designate), a faculty association representative, a student association representative, and a delegate from the prospective instructor's division or department. The interviews will be geared to the instructor's intentions in each of the four areas of import--instruction, service to the college, community service, and professional expertise--with everyone present free to ask questions.

Members of the college community will ask the instructor about his teaching. The response will fall into this pattern: "These are the courses I teach; here are my objectives and test scores; these are the results I have obtained." The instructor explains his teaching (causing learning), including the objectives he has devised, the media he has used, and the changes observed in his students. He will also present the rating scales his students have filled out in reaction to his course.

Questions in the other areas also deal with tangibles. For example, in the category of service to the college, the group may ask: "Do you plan to sponsor any clubs? Sit on any committees? Here is a list of places where help is needed. Can you participate in any of these?" In service to the community: "Do you belong to any service clubs? Do you plan to join? Would you give one or two speeches publicizing activities at the college?" In professional upgrading: "Do you plan to take any courses in your field? Attend any workshops? Subscribe to any journals? Which ones?"

The instructor must respond to these questions honestly, avoiding the temptation to delude the group or, indeed, himself. Recognizing that he cannot possibly be expert in all areas, and that time limitations preclude his attempting everything, he will have used the preparation for the interview as an opportunity to confront himself. What am I really good at? How do I want to spend my time? Which responsibility takes precedence over others? How many tasks can I reasonably assume this year? Which are most important to me?

Whatever the questions and the directions that must be taken in response, the interview is cast in a helping framework. If the instructor needs assistance in developing his objectives, a faculty member knowledgeable in the area can be assigned to work with him on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. If he has not written test items for his courses, similar aid can be provided. Certainly, this assistance will enable him to find out if his students have, indeed, learned. In addition to its measurable teaching benefits, however, such assistance may even

help the instructor become better acquainted with himself and the directions in which he is headed.

At each interview session, questions dealing with results are brought up, based on the instructor's previously stated objectives and plans. If, for example, the instructor had not sponsored a student club as previously arranged, he is asked why. Whatever the issue, however, this type of discussion also is framed in a supportive network. The group is asking in effect, "What can we do to help you accomplish your intentions?" Faculty fellowships, special purpose workshops, and other positive efforts indicate a supportive climate in which the instructor is encouraged.

Over the years a file is accumulated--the record of the instructor's goals and accomplishments, his intentions and fulfillments, the aid he has received, the progress he has made. The information reflects his professional life--how his students have rated him, objective evidence of their learning, the efforts he has made on behalf of the institution and the community, and his own professional upgrading. It also includes his colleagues' and administrators' reactions to his process[illegible]d his products.

Questions of tenure, salary, and other extraneous concomitants of evaluation systems lie beyond the province of the individual instructor. What he <u>can</u> control, however, is his own professional ledger, a record of his past professional achievement and a guide for the future. In short, self-evaluation gives the instructor a sense of structure, autonomy, and identity, an awareness of who he really is as a mature professional.

What's so novel, then, about one asking himself what he intends doing and what he has accomplished? Nothing. Most people do this continually. There are three major differences, however, between our plan and the everyday type of introspection. The first is that the questioning is set in the framework of specifics--not "I feel I did well" or "I intend doing better," but "My students learned <u>these</u> concepts as measured by <u>this</u> instrument" or "I did certain things of which these worked, those did not."

The second is that self-evaluation is brought into the open where it becomes the basis for evaluation by others. Instead of colleagues and administrators judging the instructor on criteria that may well be irrelevant, he takes the lead in putting his own criteria forward. Reactions of the others to his self-evaluation offer feedback to him, their perceptions reflecting how his role orientation and the products of his efforts look to others. This relates to the third difference between our system and ordinary introspection in that the instructor's intentions and the results he obtains become the central focus, not only of evaluation but also of instructional coordination and the allocation of resources.

Variations on the scheme described here may be made within any institution. But the basic premises remain constant--evaluation must enhance both the process leading to student learning and the identity of the individual instructor. The interview format described can improve communication and instructional processes and, not the least, encourage the instructor's own satisfaction with his work. In addition, it brings the various college factions together in a continuing dialogue about what the college is supposed to be doing.

The time is past due for this type of plan to be introduced, communicated, and defended in community colleges. The action of the legislature has provided the impetus to bring together these historically vague and neglected functions. We must follow up by making their implementation our immediate concern.

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